



The Synod of the Covenant

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Update from the General Assembly Administrative Commission for the Synod
of the Covenant

May 7, 2021

Dear Siblings in Christ,

We bring you very special greetings and prayers for a healthy and joy-filled Eastertide season. The challenges of the past year and a half have been daunting and have provided all of us with so much opportunity for learning and adapting. God is indeed doing a new thing.

The members of the Administrative Commission (AC) have been honored to work with so many leaders as we seek to restore communion and stability in the Synod of the Covenant. Across the board, you all have really stepped up and shown how much you care about the ministry of this Synod! There has been a lot to unravel and get clarity around.

For those of you who are getting involved recently, here's a little background:

In 2018, the 223rd General Assembly (GA) approved formation of an Administrative Commission (AC) with particular responsibilities and authority to address disorder in the Synod of the Covenant. The AC has been supported along the way with extraordinary assistance from the Office of General Assembly (OGA) staff. Once we were formed, we conducted an administrative review of many documents, met with and heard from current and former Synod leaders, commissioners, and effected Presbytery constituents, and attended a Synod annual meeting. Throughout this process we were guided by and encouraged in prayer and the study of Scripture. After issuing a notice of possible actions we were contemplating, we held an open forum hearing on February 12, 2020 to hear responses to those actions. After receiving this input, the Administrative Commission voted to assume Original Jurisdiction. Effectively it became the Synod Assembly as of February 12, 2020. A more detailed report is here:

<https://www.pcusa.org/news/2020/2/14/administrative-commission-general-assembly-takes-n/>.



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Since assuming jurisdiction, the AC has continued to work on our GA mandate. We are overjoyed with the progress being made to restore order and stability to the Synod of the Covenant. Thanks be to God for the leadership and resilience of so many who have willingly stepped up, even in this most difficult time. We are especially grateful for Transitional Executive Chip Hardwick for saying ‘yes’ to the AC! It’s only been slightly over a year ago that Chip took the reins, navigating the Synod of the Covenant with grace and extraordinary love of people.

It may seem strange – especially to those duly elected by their presbyteries to serve as commissioners -- for a commission of people who are not geographically in the Synod of the Covenant to be the ones with ‘power and authority to actually vote to take actions and make decisions’ impacting the Synod! The AC knows and acknowledges this, but that is what our PCUSA polity provides for in this moment. Even still, we have been observing your *energy, intelligence, imagination, and love* as you dig in and prepare to lead the synod once we step back and return jurisdiction. The AC supports Chip and Stated Clerk, Sharon Moore, as they prepare, inform, and equip people of the synod to fully participate. Your commitment and faithful contribution are admirable, and we are incredibly grateful.

Since we assumed jurisdiction based on systemic disorder within the Synod, we can take comfort that orderly functioning is being restored, healthy communication and access to information are in place, relationships are being strengthened, and improved management and leadership practices are underway and are focused on high impact areas.

There is much work still to do. Yet the Administrative Commission is very encouraged that you are on a good and healthy path. Participation in the Oct 7-9, 2021 Synod Retreat and Assembly is important to establish yourselves as the ongoing leaders of the synod, equipped with shared sense of purpose and faithful reconciliation processes. Please make sure you keep up to date with communications from the Synod by signing up for the newsletter, and your presbytery’s newsletter.



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The Administrative Commission will be engaging with a set of indicators that we will use to determine how and when to restore jurisdiction to the synod. You are showing all the healthy signs! We are encouraged for you and for your calling to share a new kind of witness in the world as Synod of the Covenant. Even as we consider restoration of jurisdiction, we are reminded that the AC will stay in place as a support for the synod until we are dissolved by the 225th General Assembly in 2022.

We cannot overstate how essential it is for all parties to seek to stay in community with each other at this critical transitional time. This witness must be held by all parties and is pursued through mutual respect and trust, and an openness to listening deeply to each other. The members of the Administrative Commission are gratified in our observations of progress toward reconciliation and healthy functioning of the synod.

Every blessing,

Patrice Hatley, Moderator of the Synod of the Covenant and
Co-Moderator of the Administrative Commission

Brady Radford, Treasurer of the Synod of the Covenant and
Co-Moderator of the Administrative Commission